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SUBJECT: JULY 12 GAERC DISCUSSIONS: ISRAEL, BURMA, SUDAN, AFGHANISTAN, BALKANS

SUMMARY

11. (U) EU FMs at their July 12 General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) meeting discussed several issues, but took few concrete decisions other than a non-controversial approval of a Joint Action to agree on Operation "ALTHEA" as an EU Military Operation following on NATO's SFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina. GAERC discussions on Iraq and the WTO Doha Round negotiations reported separately. End Summary.

ISRAEL/ICJ RULING

12. (U) Dutch FM Bot told the press after the GAERC that the EU still needed to look carefully at the International Court of Justice ruling on Israel's security fence and "achieve a common view on its political consequences." The Dutch Presidency also reissued its statement of July 9 on the ICJ case, which notes that "it will now be up to the political bodies of the UN to decide how to act upon the Court's Advisory Opinion." Bot stressed, however, that the fence issue should not be dealt with in isolation, but in the context of the road map.

ASEM/BURMA

13. (SBU) EU FMs agreed to the Dutch proposal to name former FM Hans van den Broek as an envoy to Asia to try and reach an agreement on Burmese participation that could salvage the planned Asia-Europe Summit (ASEM) in Hanoi in October. Van den Broek should be leaving on an Asian tour (with stops in at least Bangkok, Tokyo and Hanoi) in the next ten days. He is then expected to report to the EU's informal ministerial (Gymnich) on September 3. While the Presidency statement observes that "efforts are required on both sides", Commissioner Patten and others noted that the real need was for some improvement in Burma's human rights record, and so far there had been "no progress".

SUDAN

14. (U) FM Bot took strong exception to the "impression that has been created that the EU is not doing enough" about the situation in Sudan. He argued that the EU was involved in mediating the cease-fire talks, had sent observers and was the largest donor of assistance. He noted that the EU was still working on three fronts. First, it continued to provide assistance, and earlier on July 12 the Commission had announced a further 18 million euros in aid. Second, it would maintain political pressure via high-level visits by High Rep Solana and others to the region. Finally, the EU was considering what sanctions it might utilize against the government. On this last point, Bot said the EU would cooperate closely with the US, UN and African Union. He expressed the hope the Sudanese government was "finally understanding" the risks it was running.

AFGHANISTAN

15. (SBU) We are told GAERC discussion of Afghanistan was "very brief." Commissioner Patten and others expressed concern about the limited progress to date in political stabilization and noted the risk that President Karzai might be "tempted" to make political deals with various "warlords." FM Bot said the EU "regretted" the postponement of parliamentary elections.

BALKANS/OPERATION ALTHEA

16. (SBU) FMs had a lengthy discussion on the political situation in Serbia and Kosovo, but the debate was described to us as "not very illuminating." EU FMs also appointed Swedish diplomat Michael Sahlin to serve as EU Special Representative in Macedonia (replacing Soren Jessen-Pedersen, who is now head of the UN Mission in Kosovo). After a very brief presentation by High Rep Solana, EU FMs without

discussion approved the Joint Action authorizing a new EU military operation (Operation ALTHEA) in Bosnia to follow-on NATO's SFOR. The EU's "aim is to deploy by the end of the year a robust force with a Chapter VII mission." (NOTE: In Greek, Althea means "healer." But we cannot help but be a bit surprised that the EU has named its Bosnia operation after a mythological figure best known for causing her son's death, and then hanging herself. END NOTE.)
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